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SUBJECT: PRT WASIT: PROVINCIAL COUNCIL CHAIR AIRS SECURITY CONCERNS

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Greg D'Elia for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Wasit reporting cable.

[1](#)2. (S//REL USA, ACGU) Summary: In a 29 Jan meeting with PRT Team Leader (TL), Provincial Council (PC) Chairman Mohammad Hassan Jabir expressed fear that potential Sadrism election victories and the advent of Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) in Wasit would bring about ineffective government and increased militia activity. The Chairman described the Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS) political leadership and Jaysh al Mahdi (JAM) as comprising a seamless organization and recommended actions against JAM strongholds prior to Wasit,s expected transition to PIC status in April. He expressed concerns about the leadership of the IP force and Iraqi SWAT. End summary.

[1](#)3. (S//REL USA, ACGU) Jabir recently met with Sayid Sattar, head of the Wasit OMS office. Jabir said that while OMS political leaders claim to want stability in Wasit, "the opposite is true." He said JAM "was disorganized earlier," but now, "with Iranian support, they are getting more organized." He warned that, though the ceasefire holds, JAM is only "sleeping," and using the time to refit, train and plan. Specifically referring to the planned April assumption of security responsibilities by the Wasit government, Jabir warned that the transfer would spark a resurgence in JAM activity.

[1](#)4. (S//REL USA, ACGU) Jabir supports three immediate measures to weaken JAM. The first would be the establishment of an operations base for the Iraqi SWAT unit, led by Lt. Aziz Latif Abd-al-Sadah Al Ammarah, in al Anwar, a renowned JAM stronghold in al Kut. (Note: Jabir lives in Anwar. End note.). Jabir said that JAM strongly will oppose the move, but that it would be a first step in asserting IP control over a string of JAM infested neighborhoods south of the Tigris. Second, Jabir recommends execution of an IP operation to clear Zweekiyat, another JAM-dominated neighborhood. Jabir said that Wasit Governor Latif al-Turfa supports the operations in Anwar and Zweekiyat. Finally, Jabir (a former psychology professor at Wasit University and head of the Wasit Census Committee) said he conducted a "secret" study indicating that up to sixty percent of Jaysh al Mahdi (JAM) members would cease participation in militia activities if offered employment elsewhere. Jabir meant to illustrate the tenuous hold JAM has on its membership and the potential to undercut JAM strength by robust economic development.

[1](#)5. (S//REL USA, ACGU) Jabir,s proposed police actions would be led by IP Chief MG Hannin, and include LT Aziz. However, Jabir expressed concerns about both leaders. With regard to Hannin, he said many citizens view him as no more effective than his predecessor, and that this has hurt CF credibility because of the widespread belief that Hannin became IP Chief because of CF support. (Note: CF and the PRT strongly

supported Hannin,s candidacy at the provincial and national levels. End note.).

¶6. (S//REL USA, ACGU) Jabir also is concerned over increasingly negative popular perceptions of Aziz and his unit. While praising Aziz,s effectiveness at pursuing militia, he said Aziz and his men alienate citizens by "using their power for personal gain." He alleged that Aziz,s unit demands bribes from the families of detained men in return for prompt release, demands bribes from smugglers in return for safe passage, and engages in outright theft from shops and homes. Compounding the problem, he said, is the popular view that SWAT "takes orders from the Americans," thus implicating CF in Aziz,s actions. Jabir suggested that these actions and effects offset Aziz,s value as a militia fighter and actually strengthen JAM in Wasit.

¶7. (S//REL USA, ACGU) Jabir offered a dim view of Wasit,s political future at the hands of the Sadrists. He refused to accept any delineation between the Sadrist political organization and militia wing, stating that "those who control the Sadrist Trend are not political people." He described a wary relationship between OMS and JAM, with each monitoring the other, and he predicted heightened violence in the run-up to elections. Jabir mentioned that he had met Muqtada al Sadr and that he had recently refused an invitation from OMS officials to join them, scoffing at their promise to effect positive change and characterizing them as uneducated, inexperienced leaders who would likely prove incompetent in administering the provincial government. "OMS may have the votes, but they don't have the capable people," he said. Nevertheless, OMS and JAM are striving to cast themselves as legitimate political leaders, first by criticizing the performance of current officials at the

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national and provincial levels, and, second, by operating a shadow government in certain areas in order to bolster OMS claims that it could provide better services than those currently in power. Jabir lamented that GoI and Ministry unresponsiveness to provincial needs had left provincial officials vulnerable to public criticism. "Provincial officials will suffer the political fallout from national-level incompetence, he predicted. Jabir summed up that PIC and provincial elections would likely give JAM and OMS the upper hand, leading Wasit to "become like Maysan."

¶8. (S//REL USA, ACGU) Comment: As provincial elections loom and provincial officials grow apprehensive about their political vulnerability, we expect more conversations in a similar vein, alerting us to the dangers of OMS and urging support for police action against JAM strongholds. Our challenge will be to distinguish those warnings that are motivated by political self-interest from those that represent genuine security concerns. The operations described by Jabir, if undertaken, may raise the level of political violence even at this early stage in the election process. This may entangle IP Chief MG Hannin in the power struggle between Wasit's political factions. End comment.

¶9. (S//REL USA, ACGU). Bio notes: Mohammad Hassan Jabir, is an independent PC council member, and three-time PC Chairman, elected in 2005 to the PC on List 221 (indirectly supported by Grand Ayatollah Sistani). A USAID implementer rated Jabir highly for his performance as PC Chair and the PRT itself considers him a smart, astute legislative leader. He has led the Wasit Data Collection (Census) Committee and the Board for Drafting the Provincial Development Strategy; more than any other PC member, Jabir grasps the need for collecting provincial data, assessing needs, and drafting plans. Born in 1966, he is married with two children. He has a Masters Degree in Psychology, taught at Al Kut University prior to his election, and still lectures part time. He reportedly is not on good terms with Wasit Governor Latif al-Turfa. End bio notes.

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